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INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1424  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1601  
RUEPADJ/CJTF-HOA J2X CAMP LEMONIER DJ  
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 000700

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LONDON, PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/26/2017

TAGS: PHUM PGOV KREC ASEC ER

SUBJECT: BRITISH COUNCIL EMPLOYEE RELEASED

REF: ASMARA 617

Classified By: CDA Jennifer A. McIntyre, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) On August 1, the Government of the State of Eritrea (GSE) released a foreign national employee of the British Council detained since July 27. The GSE arrested the employee under the guise of national security after a visiting British diplomat was seen on the roof of the British Council conducting a telecommunications assessment for the British Council (reftel). The GSE provided no explanation for the employee's release nor offered him complete assurance that the GSE has completed and closed the investigation. The British Embassy and British Council are trying to minimize public attention to the arrest and release, given the GSE's track record for re-arresting their citizens after release.

¶2. (C) The British Charge d'Affaires informed Poloff on August 13 of the employee's release. She reported that while the employee was noticeably uncomfortable after returning to work and still in shock from his ordeal, he was in good health and had not been beaten or tortured during his detention.

¶3. (C) Comment: The release of the employee is good news. The British strategy to maintain a low profile is the right one, especially given the GSE's past history. Post recalls the case of the Swedish-Eritrean journalist in November 2005 who was re-arrested four days after his initial release following the trumpeting of the release by the international press. While the GSE never really closes arrest cases such as these, post anticipates that if the employee lays low, the GSE's interest in the case will wane over time. End Comment.

MCINTYRE